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IN GREAT NECK NY

On the 50th anniversary of KRISTALLNACHT, I spoke here at Temple Israel and related my memories of that sad night and time. Unfortunately the events are still the same and are worth repeating, for the important reason that all of us should "Tamid Sachor", always remember!

When we talk about something happening 60 years from now, it seems an eternity away. However, as I look back 60 years, it seems what happened to me, surely happened to someone else in another life. To be honest, I try not to think too much about KRISTALLNACHT and everything revolving around that era in my life, as the memories are too painful.

Now that we are focusing on that time, I too, try to think back on where I was on that fateful night. In fact, I was living in Leipzig with my parents, going to a Jewish school, Karlebach Schule, as we could not go to the German public schools. I was trying to concentrate on school work - Hebrew lessons, sports and all of the usual things young girls like. But that was not to be!

Life in Germany, as I remember it, was always lived in fear. Hitler was growing stronger every day and we knew that as polish Jews, our days were numbered.

Once on my way to school, a big German girl from the Hitler Jugend, shouted at me, "You Jewish cow" Although I was scared to death, I don't know where I got the guts, but I shouted back at her, "I may be a Jew, but you are a cow"

Two weeks before KRISTALLNACHT, the Germans were rounding up all polish-born Jews to deport them somewhere. Several Storm troopers came to our apartment and ordered us to come out with them. Of course we dared not to ask them where they were taking us. Somehow we arrived at the BAHNHOF, a huge railroad station, where we saw many other Jews being shipped out on trains. We had no idea where their destination was, but I seem to recall that the names of DACHAU and BUCHENWALD were surfacing a lot. Just as it was going to be our turn, someone whispered to my father: "Get out of here through the back door ,very slowly"

I can't recall how it happened, but somehow we ended up at the Polish Consulate where we met several hundred other Jews in the same boat. I recall we stayed there for several days and slept on the floor, one person next to the other. We were wall to wall people until we were told it was safe to go home.

We were aware of unrest in the streets. People were running in all directions and shouting. We witnessed huge fires in the streets and the Germans throwing lots of books into the fire. Germans were beating Jewish men and women and directing them towards the railroad station, where they were shipped out to concentration camps. It was truly a nightmare and it was a miracle that we survived that night.

The next two weeks we led a very frightening existence; not going to school and barely going into the street, Then a 17 year old Polish Jew, called GRYNSPAN, killed the third secretary of the German Embassy in Paris. GOEBBELS used the event as a pretext to start KRISTALLNACHT. His intention was to frighten the Jew into leaving Germany. The lucky ones succeeded, but most could not. Nobody wanted them. All the doors, including the doors to America, were closed. As we all know now, this was the beginning of the HOLOCAUST.

However our survival did not last long. After we were smuggled across the border into Poland, which was a harrowing experience in itself.

My parents put me on a train to go to England with the KINDERTRANSPORT. The scene at the small railroad station will be cemented in my mind forever. As the train was leaving, I saw my parents crying and running along the platform, my mother with outstretched arms as though she wanted to take me off the train crying and screaming:"Meine Kleine" . As the train was picking up speed, my parents faded into the distance, That was the last time I saw my father and mother.

In 1936 GOEBBELS said:" In ten years, only Jewish graves will be left In Europe.". Unfortunately we did not listen to his words.

LOTTIE BLYE
21 RAVINE RD
GREAT NECK NY 11023